

WMCA Board

Date	24 July 2020
Report title	Economic Recovery in the West Midlands
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Report has been considered by	Programme Board Economic Recovery Steering Group - 10 July 2020 Strategic Economic Development Board (by correspondence) Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 13 July 2020

Recommendations for action or decision:

WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Note the executive summary of “State of the Region” report (Appendix 1) and the principal challenges identified for the region.
- (2) Endorse the role of the Mayoral Combined Authorities in leading the regional approach to economic recovery, in line with correspondence from the Minister for Regional Growth & Local Government (Appendix 2).
- (3) Adopt the proposed regional approach to economic recovery, and the mission to help recharge the West Midlands economy and forge a greener and more inclusive region.

- (4) Endorse 'Recharge the West Midlands' (Appendix 3), the investment case developed at pace by partners across the region to support rapid economic recovery. This was submitted to Government on 22 June 2020 using the WMCA Chief Executive's delegated authority, following discussion by the Recovery Forum and partners.
- (5) Note the implications for the West Midlands of announcements by the Prime Minister and Chancellor, and the approach to the 'shovel ready' local fund (Appendix 4).
- (6) Agree the elements of the economic recovery roadmap which helps the region deliver the 'Recharge' projects and sets the basis for local authorities, LEPs, the Combined Authority, universities and other partners to refresh the region's policy framework.
- (7) Reaffirm the importance of public, private and community sectors working together, guided by the 10 priority outcomes agreed in early May.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 In addition to its devastating human impact, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a severe global economic shock. Together, the region's civic and business leaders have responded to the economic emergency, put the region on the front-foot to support and accelerate economic recovery and set the direction to reshape the region's economic strategy to drive inclusive and green growth.
- 1.2 This report:
 - 1.2.1 Provides an overview of the 'State of the Region' and the particular challenges inferred from the evidence.
 - 1.2.2 Summarises the action taken by civic and business leaders to secure emergency economic support and ensure businesses have been able to restart safely and effectively after lockdown.
 - 1.2.3 Highlights the region's bold proposition for government support to kickstart the economic recovery with immediate, distinctively West Midlands asks.
 - 1.2.4 Explains the implications for the West Midlands of major announcements by the Prime Minister and Chancellor about economic support. This includes an injection of funding to support 'shovel ready' local projects, where the region is invited to respond.
 - 1.2.5 Provides the foundation for partners to refresh the region's economic strategy, setting a strong framework to capitalise on new global megatrends and further embedding inclusive and green growth in all policies and programmes.

2. 'State of the Region' and economic context

- 2.1 The 'State of the Region' report (**Appendix 1**) provides a thorough analysis of the region's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It describes how, in the past 12 months, the West Midlands region broke through the £100bn GVA barrier and had been bucking the national trend on a host of economic indicators, such as enterprise and employment growth. All this was powered by a young workforce, increasing its skills and moving to the region. However, underlying this growth there were significant issues with inequality, poverty, youth unemployment, low skills, poor health and school performance.
- 2.2 Since the turn of the year, the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been severe. First quarter UK GDP fell dropped 20% compared to last year, manufacturing PMI hit an all-time low and 496,000 people across the 3 LEP area are on furlough. The overall claimant count has gone up by a third and youth claimants have doubled. Sectors where we have previously seen growth and expansion are now hardest hit, such as construction and the expanding higher education sector which makes our 3 cities, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton vulnerable. WM-Redi (with support of and in collaboration of the ODA) continue to produce weekly Economic Monitors¹, which are shared and discussed with the Economic Impact Group and local authority/LEP economy directors.

¹ For past issues of the WM-Redi Weekly Monitor, see: <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/cityredi/back-issues-of-the-west-midlands-weekly-economic-impact-monitor/>

- 2.3 Economic models consistently show the West Midlands to be hit hardest by the economic crisis. This is because of our industrial and demographic mix, with some local economies among the most vulnerable in the UK (e.g. Stratford upon Avon, Tamworth and Dudley). Those same models also show relatively strong regional growth in 2021, but this depends on assumptions about health conditions, future market demand and international trade agreements. The point is that the stakes are high everywhere, but particularly so in the West Midlands.
- 2.4 However, our economic performance over the last 10 years since the last recession, should give us confidence that with the appropriate support from Government, we can return to growth rapidly, as was the case with our recovery to the 2008 recession.
- 2.5 The evidence base on the impact of Covid-19 illustrates several policy challenges, which either threaten our strengths or further stress structural issues within the regional economy:

A. Good health & wellbeing – The pandemic has highlighted the West Midlands’ relatively poor health outcomes. The major challenge is to drive greater physical activity and better ensure research and commercial strengths in data driven healthcare and life sciences result in improvements in population health.

B. Reduced inequalities – The pandemic has highlighted significant inequalities across national and regional economies. Whether about the nature of work and households’ financial resilience, or access to digital infrastructure and safe housing conditions, the region’s civic and business leaders aim for a recovery that is inclusive and works for everyone, across all the region’s towns, cities and rural areas. The major challenge is being able to target support effectively and understand the distributional benefits as outcomes are levelled-up across the West Midlands and the UK.

C. Sustainable communities – Less commuting and more homeworking has meant people spend more time in their neighbourhoods, which has illustrated the importance of strong local businesses and community infrastructure, like parks and high streets, to communities. The major challenge is to understand the long-term implications of these changing commercial and societal trends and help towns, cities and rural areas adapt.

D. Decent work & economic growth – Decent work improves wellbeing as well as providing income. The pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of jobs in the foundational economy – essential shopworkers, carers, logistics and utilities workers. The region had underlying issues with people unable to access good employment because of their lack of qualifications, but demand for labour had been strong. The pandemic has dramatically reduced that demand, particularly in hospitality, retail and culture, which employ high numbers of young people. There is also evidence about long-term scarring that can come from un- or under-employment. The major challenges are stimulating demand for labour and ensuring everyone has the support to develop their skills and find secure work.

E. Industry, innovation & infrastructure – The sectoral assessments highlight the region’s distinctive strengths, but they can act as breaks as well as catalysts of growth. Experience from previous recoveries shows that our main tradeable assets can boost a quick recovery, so it is vital they are protected. The region’s universities are also at risk, which help drive innovation, high-level skills and business investment in R&D. HS2, the Commonwealth Games and the City of Culture are distinctive strengths that provide the West Midlands with a global platform. The major policy challenge is to mitigate harm to key sectors while ensuring that local people benefit from game-changing investments.

F. Clean & affordable energy – people have valued a cleaner environment and better air quality. #WM2041 sets out both the scale of the challenge and the opportunity, with new technology and the need for safe, secure energy creating demand for new forms of mobility and electrification. The West Midlands has major innovation assets in energy and electric vehicle manufacturing providing jobs in one of our biggest sectors, along with potential for large scale retrofit programmes to improve the efficiency of the region’s housing stock.

3. Emergency economic response

3.1 The emergency economic response comprised complementary activity at national local and regional level:

- **National measures** taken by government, including furloughing 496,000 workers across the three-LEP area at a cost of around £1.3 billion so far, new business grant and loan schemes, support for self-employed workers and supporting local authorities. The Bank of England has also injected a further £200 billion of quantitative easing and cut interest rates to a historic low of 0.1%.
- **Local measures** delivered by local authorities. This includes paying £459 million to 38,938 West Midlands business, administering hardship funds to residents, administering business rate holidays, providing free parking and making the public realm safe by, for example, widening pavements. Government has also paid £177.4 million in emergency funding to the seven constituent members of the WMCA, although Covid-19 related financial pressures are significantly larger, and there is a need to establish sustainable funding for local public services.
- **Regional and sub-regional measures**, including Growth Hubs increasing business support and information in the face of huge demand, flexing existing programmes, and introducing new measures like the Rapid Recruitment Service, which helped redeploy key workers to firms seeking new workers.

3.2 The region’s civic and business leaders acted quickly, recognising the need to understand the impact of emergency economic support measures. The Covid-19 economic impact was formed, bringing together over 40 of the region’s business, political, university and trade union leaders who have met weekly over the last 20 weeks. They have acted to identify and lobby government to address gaps in support to mid-sized firms, self-employed people. More recently, they have helped share vital insight across major businesses from different sectors about how the transition from lockdown is supporting business recovery.

4. Economic recovery

- 4.1 The region has been proactive to shape, rather than react to, the economic curve. Evidence from previous economic crises shows the importance of both mitigating economic harm to communities and businesses and stimulating growth in new industries to accelerate recovery. This period of significant economic change will also precipitate new global megatrends and opportunity to further embed the region's aims for a green and inclusive economy.
- 4.2 The Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government has written to the Mayor (**Appendix 2**) asking Mayoral Combined Authorities lead economic recovery planning in their regions, emphasising the need to continue to develop evidence-led thinking and collaborate closely with Local Enterprise Partnerships and other local partners.
- 4.3 The region's Strategic Economic Development (SED) Board, Recovery Forum and EIG have all helped guide an approach to economic recovery that is agile, where the right interventions are delivered at the right moment to meet economic and social needs. This means recognising the phases of economic recovery are dynamic and subject to the linked issues of:
- Public health conditions and the speed and effectiveness of a vaccine / treatment
 - Effectiveness of global and national economic support
 - Business and consumer confidence and new megatrends around behaviours, technologies and trade.
- 4.4 The region's approach is guided by four principles:
- Acting quickly and based on high-quality evidence, with economic recovery planning beginning in mid-April.
 - Emphasis to not just return to the old economy but use the change to embed the region's ambitious aims to create an inclusive, net zero carbon economy.
 - To work collaboratively on agreed priority outcomes that reflect the different economic priorities across the region, with interventions being delivered at the most local level.
 - Embedding a strong and ongoing business voice in economic activity.
- 4.5 The region's overall economic recovery plan has several components. Work is underway on all, but they each result specific products at different times, reflecting the different phases of the economic crisis. The components, products and approval points are shown below:

Components of the regional economic recovery	Status
1. Overview and 10-point plan	Agreed by Leaders on 7 May
2. Intelligence and analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regional assets impact of Covid-19 sector impacts new global megatrends and implications for West Midlands 	State of the Region report (Appendix 1)
3. Immediate investment case to government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> recovery drivers enablers business support and public services responding to calls from government departments 	'Recharge the West Midlands' submitted to government on 22 June (Appendix 3)
4. Long-term reset of economic strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> outcomes framework identifying the main measures of success for recovery policy priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> foundations sector plans sub-regional plans ways of working within the region (e.g. business engagement, institutions) ways of working with Government (powers and resources and Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper) 	For input and design over summer Submission to Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper (expected autumn) Submission to Autumn Budget and possible Spending Review (expected September)

4.6 The region's Mayor, local authority leaders, LEP Chairs, trade unions and Growth Company signalled their priorities for economic recovery on 7 May and how it would benefit the region's communities, businesses and places:



5. Recharge the West Midlands: An investment case to government

- 5.1 Given economic conditions, the region's political and business leaders were confident that there would be an opportunity in July for government to support projects that can stimulate immediate economic demand and underpin business and consumer confidence. This will be followed in autumn 2020 with a Budget and possibly a Spending Review, providing further opportunity for public investment.
- 5.2 Partners across the region have worked intensively to produce '**Recharge the West Midlands. Kickstarting the West Midlands Economy: Our investment case to government**'. This represented a £3.2 billion proposition to government to create or safeguard 135,800 jobs, support 154,400 young people and workers and build 35,000 more homes in the region.
- 5.3 The list of asks has deliberately been ambitious to secure as much additional investment as possible. As the largest region outside London, generating £105bn of GVA and 5.5% of the UK's economic output, the West Midlands should be a substantial part of the government's plans for national economic recovery. We have already leveraged substantial investments for our proposals from both private and public sector partners, and this proposition provides an opportunity to accelerate and amplify those impacts, with projects that can be delivered quickly.
- 5.4 The proposition is structured upon seven packages, with the document also emphasising the importance of properly funded public services. Together, these packages represent the ambitious scaling up of existing plans and new programmes and projects to tackle the problems which are specific to the region's economic needs, exposed as a result of the post Covid-19 context:
- Creating green manufacturing jobs
 - Maximising job opportunities from HS2, City of Culture and the Commonwealth Games for local people
 - Investing in healthcare innovation
 - Building better transport and digital links
 - Regenerating brownfield land and building more homes
 - Getting people back into work
 - Backing our region's businesses
- 5.5 The work was overseen by a Steering Committee of WMCA Portfolio Holder for the Economy and Innovation, Councillor Ian Brookfield, SED Board Chair Tim Pile, Mayor Andy Street and WMCA Chief Executive Deborah Cadman, with regular updates and opportunities for input provided to the Mayor/Leaders Forum as the work has developed. Additional external capacity was engaged to support the WMCA with the economic analysis and programme management of this short piece of urgent work.
- 5.6 Over 160 projects from local authorities, LEPs, universities and previous WMCA Budget materials formed the basis of the original pipeline. This was then refined in conjunction with LEPs based on scale and regional impact, being able to mobilise quickly and alignment to regional and central government priorities, for example:

- Drives a sustainable and rapid recovery from the Covid-19 economic shock
- Alignment to levelling-up agenda
- Alignment to net zero ambitions
- Alignment to post-Covid behaviour and market changes
- Value for money requirements
- Broad-based regional support

5.7 The overall narrative and mix of programmes and projects embed key regional priorities:

- Focus on inclusive growth
- Balance across the whole region
- The West Midlands' #2041 green ambitions
- Investments that can mobilise quickly and support jobs
- Will deliver on the government's levelling up agenda
- That will support the region's longer-term economic ambitions.

5.8 'Recharge the West Midlands' has been built collaboratively and depends on a range of partners to secure investment and deliver. During its rapid development, the shape of the proposition was tested with business leaders and local authorities, including a roundtable of senior business leaders convened by Liv Garfield, chief executive of Severn Trent plc. Post-submission, there has been a powerful effort to champion the region's proposals, including:

- A letter of support to the Chancellor signed by 610 business leaders, coordinated by the three Chambers of Commerce, LEPs and business groups.
- Enlisting the support of West Midlands MPs at the West Midlands APPG on Tuesday 23 June.
- Op-eds by prominent regional leaders in several specialist journals highlighting the overall proposition and impact in the West Midlands.
- Supportive press and social media campaigns across the WMCA and partners.

5.9 Any proposals which do not secure funding immediately will continue to be reviewed and developed, forming the pipeline of new projects, ahead of future fiscal events. Section 7 describes the practical steps to secure and oversee the delivery of 'Recharge the West Midlands'.

6. Government announcements and funding for local growth

6.1 On 30 June, the Prime Minister made a major speech in Dudley to champion 'build, build, build' as a way of stimulating economic demand by accelerating capital/infrastructure projects. The announcement included:

- a. **£1.5bn** for hospital building, maintenance and improving A&E capacity
- b. **£100m** for 29 road network projects across England,
- c. **£900m** for to "Get Britain Building" with shovel ready local projects in England this year and in 2021
- d. **£0.5m - £1m** for each area in the towns fund to spend on improvements to parks, high street and transport
- e. A **£12bn** affordable homes programme
- f. **£560m and £200m** for repairs and upgrades to schools and Further Education (FE) colleges respectively this year
- g. Over **£1bn** to fund 50 new schools

- h. **Policy and institutional measures**, including:
- i. A new Infrastructure Delivery Taskforce, named 'Project Speed' and led by the Chancellor.
 - ii. A major review of the planning system to facilitate faster development
 - iii. A Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper
 - iv. Launch of the National Infrastructure Plan later this year
 - v. A new Science Funding agency

6.2 The West Midlands specific details include:

- £83 million of the Brownfield Fund to support the building of up to 7,500 new homes.
- 4 of the road projects are in Coventry, Solihull, Sandwell and Wolverhampton, with a combined value of £15 million.
- Investment into Bloxwich, Dudley, Rowley Regis, Smethwick, Walsall, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton via the Towns Fund.
- Support for the CA's plan to build a gigafactory to the region, with the Prime Minister committing: *"We will back that vision. This government will back that vision"*.
- On additional funds, such as FE capital and affordable housing monies, we await further detail about what this will mean for the region.

6.3 Ministers have written to the Mayor and LEP Chairs with further details about the "Get Britain Building" local infrastructure fund (**Appendix 4**). This will see £66 million invested in projects in the WMCA area, with a further £8.1m invested in Warwickshire, coordinated by the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP. These projects will be completed by January 2022 and drive up economic growth and jobs and supporting green recovery. Town and city centre modernisation, physical and digital connectivity, innovation ecosystems and improving human capital are all highlighted as important departmental aims. The WMCA and LEPs are preparing a response on behalf of the region, due for submission on 17 July following a collaborative process that used:

- Original 'long-lists' developed by LEPs and the WMCA, drawn from established project pipelines. This totalled 137 projects.
- A rigorous test of deliverability to be confident of delivery by January 2022 and alignment with national and regional priorities.
- A collaborative prioritisation process, including striking a balance between transformative proposals and the need to strike a balance of activity across the region.

6.4 The Chancellor's 'summer statement' on 8 July was designed as a plan for jobs. This focused on skills and labour market support measures, including initiatives to stimulate demand in the hospitality and housing markets. The plan consisted of national policy solutions, where major elements were:

- i. **Job Retention Bonus** - £1,000 to be paid to businesses that retain furlough staff from November 2020 to January 2021, staff must be paid £520 per month at minimum. This could equate to up £9bn in payments.
- ii. **Boosting worksearch, skills and apprenticeships:**
- iii. **Kickstart Scheme** – £2bn work experience programme for 16-24 year olds that have been unemployed for more than six months.

- a. New payment of £2,000 to employers in England for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and a £1,500 payment for each new apprentice they hire aged 25 and over.
- b. £111m extra will be added to the traineeship budget, employers will be paid £1,000 per trainee.
- c. £100m for more places on level 2 and 3 courses.
- d. £32m over two years for the National Careers Service to fund careers advice for 269,000 more people.
- e. £17m to expand sector-based work academies, tripling places.
- iv. **Reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, accommodation and attractions** - Temporary cut to VAT on food, accommodation and attractions from 20% to 5% for six months
- v. **Eat Out to Help Out** - vouchers that will give diners 50% off their meals out for August.
- vi. **Public sector and social housing decarbonisation** – £1bn to improve energy efficiency of public buildings
- vii. **Green Homes Grant** - A £2bn "green homes grant" to help make homes more energy efficient. This would provide at least £2 for every £1 homeowners and landlords spend to make their homes more energy efficient, up to £5,000 per household.
- viii. **Stamp Duty Land Tax temporary cut** - Temporary cut to stamp- increasing the 0% band threshold to £500,000 until March 2021.

6.5 The Chancellor explained: *“the plan for jobs will not be the last action – it is merely the next - in our fight to recover and rebuild after coronavirus”*. Future milestones include:

- Potential further short-term departmental announcements - such as the £1.57 billion package for the cultural and creative industries announced on 5 July²
- Publication of the National Infrastructure Plan, Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper and ‘Operation Birch’ with support for strategically important firms.
- Major future fiscal events, including the Autumn Budget and Spending Review.

7. Next steps

7.1 The region has two crucial next steps:

7.1.1 Delivering “Recharge the West Midlands”: this means further developing robust business cases for the projects and promoting with decision-makers across government. Where funding is secured, projects must mobilise quickly and if projects do not secure investment immediately, they will be incorporated into the integrated regional pipeline.

² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/157-billion-investment-to-protect-britains-world-class-cultural-arts-and-heritage-institutions>

7.1.2 Agreeing to refresh the region’s vision, strategy and plans: while the region’s recovery work is rooted in its existing agreed strategies and plans, such as the Local Industrial Strategy, Strategic Economic Plan, Regional Skills Plan, Strategic Transport Plan and Housing Deal, we know that the Covid-19 pandemic will fundamentally change the way businesses and communities operate. There, is therefore, a clear need to refresh the region’s economic policies to take account of the Covid-19 changes, further embed green and inclusive growth and ensure that they are agile to be able to adapt to future economic conditions.

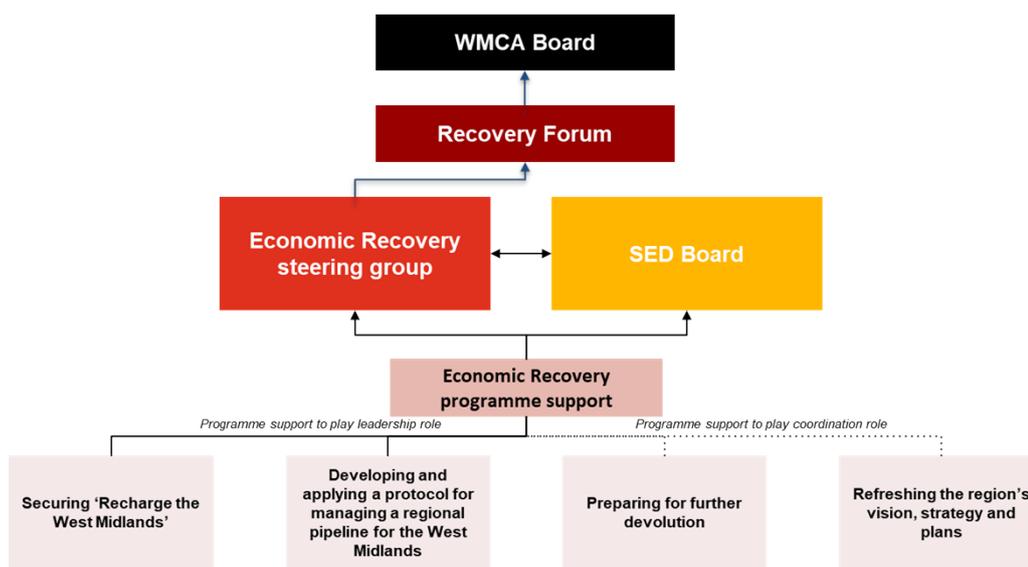
7.2 This will be supported by four vital underpinning actions:

7.2.1 Agreeing the principle of maintaining an integrated regional pipeline of projects: that is owned by the WMCA, local authorities and LEPs and is kept continuously up to date. This ensures the region is on the front-foot to put forward a compelling proposition for the Autumn Budget and Spending Review. As well as capital projects, this pipeline can also incorporate national policy asks or better coordinated activities across the region.

7.2.2 Continuing to develop ambitious proposals for further devolution: the Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper provides an opportunity to further the transfer of powers and resources to the most local level possible in order to drive economic recovery from the pandemic.

7.2.3 Direction and oversight: with the Combined Authority Board providing decision-making, and the Recovery Forum giving the region’s democratically-accountable leaders power to shape the region’s economic recovery, working in conjunction with business leaders and the SED Board. See figure 1 below.

Figure 1:



7.2.4 Instigating economic recovery programme support, bringing together capacity and expertise from across the WMCA, local authorities and LEPs to focus on the two next steps above.

7.3 These elements will be driven forward over the summer and will report back to the WMCA Board in September.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no direct budgetary or expenditure implications arising from this report.

8.2 Requests to Government totalling £3.2 billion have been submitted to help stimulate the local economy of the West Midlands and should Government agree to support some or all of these initiatives, more detailed proposals will be submitted to the WMCA Board on a case by case basis as investments obtain approval through the relevant assurance and approval processes.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The legal implications in this case mirror the observations made in section 8 above in that they will flow from the shape and nature of the successful award following this process. Many of these proposals will require detailed legal input at the appropriate stage and if necessary, further consideration of the best way to deliver in the light of the Combined Authority's powers. There will be resource implications around capacity in order to deliver at pace.

10. Inclusive Growth Implications

10.1 We have deliberately put inclusive growth at the heart of our economic recovery plans. We know that those who were worse off before the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to be harder hit by the economic impact. This package of investment proposals to Government will bring direct and immediate benefits to people who have been hit hardest by the crisis. Our Investment Case to Government is specifically designed to:

- Unlock a huge programme of employment and skills support, helping unemployed people into work, retraining and young people make the transition to employment.
- Focus on sectors which create large numbers of jobs at low- and middle-income levels (£20-35k): green retrofit, Gigafactory, manufacturing advisory service.
- R&D programmes to ensure long-term sustainability of large numbers of middle-income jobs in the region: R&D lifeboat, Life Sciences Park, ReSCue life sciences supply chain.

10.2 We will escalate our work to improve the health and productivity of our residents through providing rapid access to screening and accessible diagnostic health provision and innovations to address health inequalities:

- Our housing programme will focus on developing proposals for affordable and social housing, including a new £50m programme providing affordable homes for keyworkers with local people actively trained and supported into the construction jobs created.
- We will create construction jobs in brownfield remediation and housebuilding and 26,000 construction jobs across the whole economic recovery programme.

- We will accelerate programmes to connect people into work through investment in improved transport connections to less affluent areas of the West Midlands e.g. Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton, East Birmingham and enhanced accessibility through broadband and 5G.
- Keeping businesses afloat to keep people in their jobs.

10.3 In designing business cases, project promoters will examine how they can target those groups that are particularly vulnerable, and we are continuing to develop new initiatives over the coming months targeting BAME communities, graduates and others particularly affected by the Covid-19 crisis. In particular we are committed to helping young people, who may lose opportunities as a result of this recession. We will work with partners across the region - local authorities, JobCentres, FE Colleges and training providers, the voluntary sector, West Midlands Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner - to support young people at this challenging time.

11. Geographical area of report's implications

11.1 Working with LEPs and local authorities, the various programmes have been developed to address local economic need and ensure a good balance across the Combined Authority area.

12. Schedule of Background Papers

Appendix 1 – State of the Region 2020 – Executive Summary

Appendix 2 – Letter from Minister Simon Clarke to the Mayor of the West Midlands

Appendix 3 – ‘Recharge the West Midlands: Investment Case to Government’

Appendix 4 – Letter from Secretary of State Robert Jenrick MP on the “Get Britain Building” fund for local infrastructure projects